United Nations A/S-24/PV.5

General Assembly

Twenty-fourth special session

Official Records

5th meeting
Wednesday, 28 June 2000, 10 a.m.
Geneva

President Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Proposals for further initiatives for social development

(a) Review and appraisal of progress since the World Summit for Social Development

(b) Proposals for further initiatives for the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by Her Excellency The Honourable Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Vice-President of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mrs. Macapagal-Arroyo (Philippines): Let me join the other speakers in expressing our confidence that, under the leadership of the President, and given the goodwill and cooperation of all the delegates, our meeting will come to a fruitful conclusion. This follow-up summit should result in forward-looking initiatives that will bring the Copenhagen process farther.

The Copenhagen Summit agreed that social development consists of poverty eradication, employment expansion and social integration. The President of the Philippines, His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada, has asked me to inform you on his behalf that these three strategies are stressed in our medium-term Philippine development plan for the period 1999-2004.

With regard to poverty reduction, we are seeking to tackle this by pursuing measures within the overall framework of human capital formation, improvement of basic social services, expansion of microcredit and strong participation of the poor. We have to strengthen our social safety nets to better respond to and protect the poor from the risks of globalization. We support the need to integrate both social and economic concerns in the design of structural adjustment, as well as reform programmes.

We recognize the global target of reducing the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by one half by the year 2015. We shall make efforts to contribute to this by aiming for a reduction in our own incidence of poverty from 31.8 per cent in 1997 to 25 to 28 per cent in 2004.

With regard to full employment, the Philippine Government's goals include the provision and expansion of remunerative employment, with full respect for basic workers' rights, livelihood opportunities and entrepreneurial activities which include the disadvantaged groups and individuals.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

00-60220 (E)

The twin effects of the Asian financial crisis and the El Niño weather phenomenon, coupled with the emerging unbalanced impact of globalization, have affected our labour productivity. We therefore have to adopt appropriate measures to improve productivity and conditions of work. We see the need for a multilateral initiative to understand better the social dimension of globalization, to promote gender equality and eliminate gender discrimination in the labour market, and to improve methods for collection and analysis of basic employment data and mechanisms to measure unremunerated work.

We support the move to recognize full respect for basic workers' rights and to protect the rights of migrant workers. We encourage countries which have not yet done so to ratify as soon as possible the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

With regard to promoting social integration, the Philippine Government pursues this for the poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Our interventions are guided by participation of local government units, non-governmental organizations, private organizations and beneficiaries themselves; focused targeting on depressed areas; integrated delivery of basic services; and emphasis on the family as the centre of social development.

At the international level, effective collaboration is needed to address such social issues as drug-trafficking, trafficking in women and children, terrorism, environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS, the proliferation of street children, the marginalization of persons with disabilities, and disease among internal refugees fleeing from armed conflict, among others. We particularly appeal for assistance for the immediate health needs of civilians displaced by armed conflict.

The Philippines seeks to put in place an enabling environment for social development by the devolution of social services to local government units and by attempting to move towards greater partnership and regular dialogue between Government and the people. Devolution has encouraged a greater sense of responsibility among local government units. However, the lack of resources and expertise limits their potential. Hence, we see the need for the continuing conduct of capability-building programmes in the areas of planning, programming, resource mobilization, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development projects.

At the international level, we support the need to refrain from any unilateral measures, particularly the denial of basic social services, as a form of political pressure, and the need for improved measures to address the excessive volatility of short-term international capital flows, as well as the external debt problems of developing countries.

The share of social services in the Philippine budget has increased from 27 per cent in 1995 to 34 per cent in the year 2000, reflecting our aspiration to achieve our social development goals.

At the international level, the donor community can assist developing countries by reversing the current decline in official development assistance, by fulfilling the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for overall official development assistance, by allocating 20 per cent of its official development assistance to basic social services, by providing more grant assistance, rather than loans, for social development, and by giving more concessional financing for social development.

The twenty-first century is the century of the new economy, characterized by advances in information technology. Let us join hands in seeking ways to harness this new economy so as to make our world a happier and more comfortable home to live in for all people. By God's grace, and with our collective desire, we can meet this challenge.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. José Luis Rodríguez García, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and Minister for Economy and Planning of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez García (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Five years ago, 118 leaders at the highest level from all over the world met in Copenhagen to consider social development issues, with the hope of finding the way to a definite solution.

Already in 1995 the disastrous effects of neo-liberal globalization on economic and social development were being noticed, despite attempts to hide the negative results. Once again the fallacy was proclaimed that once economic growth had been achieved and certain adjustment policies established, social development would flow naturally from the enormous wealth created for all. The invisible hand of

the market, now post-modern and globalized, with its proclaimed wisdom, would take charge of putting everything in its place.

Five years have passed, and again we face a reality very different from the one that was predicted for us then. Now, more moderate expressions reappear. Imperfections of the market and the necessity of lessening their effects are spoken of. The State is even invoked to undo the capricious injustices of what some call the inequality of access to the benefits of the globalization. However, what is obvious cannot be hidden: neither the promised economic growth nor the social development has occurred.

The underdeveloped countries that grew at an annual average rate of 6.2 per cent between 1990 and 1995 reached a growth rate of only 4.8 per cent from 1995 to 1999. In 1997, an unprecedented financial crisis fell on South-East Asia and Latin America, demolishing the monetary reserves of a group of countries, reserves which, having been accumulated over a period of years, disappeared in a few hours, sunk in the turbulence of international financial speculation.

The consequences soon followed. In the decade of the nineties, the external indebtedness of the so-called third world went from about 1.5 billion dollars to around 2.5 billion, consolidating debt as a sinister mechanism of exploitation and dominance of our peoples. Faced with this hard reality, mean-spirited solutions were proposed, such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, which in reality has only reduced the payment obligations of a few countries in four years. To the above-mentioned, we should add a worsening of the terms of exchange that places the value of a group of basic products at levels of three decades ago.

Far from compensating for the decrease of resources available for development, the momentum of neo-liberal adjustment policies has — through massive privatization, reduction of social expenditure and liberalization of the market, where the law of the big corporations prevails — deprived the poorest countries of the few means in hands of the State. The social impact of such policies has been an unprecedented crisis in which the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. In 1960, the 20 per cent of the world population that lived in the richest countries enjoyed 30 times the income of the 20 per cent that lived in the poorest countries. By 1997, this proportion had reached 74 to 1. In just the last five years, 1.5 billion people became indigent.

The possibilities to earn a living honestly by working have decreased, and the number of unemployed has increased from 120 to 150 million. Eight hundred million human beings scratching out a miserable existence suffer from chronic hunger, and 840 million adults are still unable either to read or write their names because they are chronically illiterate.

The youngest have no hope at all. It is enough to say that the level of infant mortality has not changed significantly, that 250 million children under 15 years of age have to work to survive, and that 130 million do not attend school to receive even an elementary education.

Under these conditions there is an ever greater exodus towards the cities, while at the same time the degradation of the environment becomes inevitable in the struggle for subsistence.

All this happens in a world where selfishness is promoted over social solidarity, where discrimination and marginalization foster exclusive societies, where violence as a way of life and drug use as a daily habit become part of an alienating consumer society that destroys the fabric of the social and family life.

The social problems that afflict the poor countries require resources, but there is no need to look for them where they do not exist. Decrease the 780 billion dollars spent on arms in 1999, eliminate the alienating expenditures for advertising that consume billions of dollars annually, restrain financial speculation through taxes, and the resources will appear.

Cuba has always defended the concept that development should not be reduced to the growth of the economy but rather is indissolubly linked to social development. It is impossible to aspire to authentic development for human beings without the full satisfaction of basic human needs and without a more educated society. We have been consistent in defending these ideas as the right of all Cubans to enjoy solidarity with each and every one of our countrymen. Today we are a people able to mobilize in defence of a kidnapped boy in the most powerful country on earth, demanding his right to a better life.

Even in the middle of the economic war that the United States has waged against Cuba for more than 40 years, our economy has sustained a gradual recovery, growing on average 4 per cent annually for the last five years.

The average number of inhabitants per doctor has dropped from 193 to 172; the infant mortality rate has dropped from 9.4 to 6.4 per 1,000 births; the average level of schooling has gone from 8 to 9 levels of instruction; and social security benefits have increased by 7.2 per cent in those same years. Not one school has been closed, not one hospital or childcare centre. Even faced with unavoidable shortages, we have not stopped offering our assistance to other peoples, particularly in the field of medical care and educating students of various underdeveloped countries. This aid has been increased over the last five years.

Cuba has demonstrated that we can make considerable progress in social development with few resources if the political will exists to do it, without subjecting ourselves to the laws of the market. This is not the situation of the majority of the population which survives with great difficulty in the underdeveloped world, which does not demand from us more resolutions that are encouraging yet unworkable under the unjust international economic order that exists today.

This is not the moment to assume a posture of resigned discouragement nor for supplications; rather it is a time to raise our demands as human beings in order to reach a worthy and honourable life. It is necessary to put an end to the unfulfilled promises. It is not possible that millions should destroy themselves so that some few can live amid material wealth which many times is accompanied by profound moral poverty. The thirst for justice of the exploited of the earth can be satisfied only if there is a better distribution of wealth, if solidarity displaces selfishness, if we all fight together for a better future. That is the mandate from our peoples. Let us fulfil our duty, and there won't be anything that we cannot accomplish.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Basri Hasanuddin, State Minister Coordinator for People's Welfare and Poverty Eradication of the Republic of Indonesia.

Mr. Hasanuddin (Indonesia): On behalf of my delegation I would like to join previous speakers in extending our warm appreciation to the United Nations and to the Swiss Government for facilitating and hosting this important gathering focusing on world social development issues.

In the years that have elapsed since the convening of the World Summit for Social Development, the international community has made strides in bringing social issues to the forefront of its agenda. The achievements and progress that have been made in creating a better awareness of social issues are indeed laudable. Nevertheless, we are far from realizing the lofty and noble goals to enhance the human condition and to improve standards of living for all that were so eloquently espoused during the Summit meeting.

Poverty runs rampant throughout the world and in some countries has actually increased. Reducing unemployment, let alone addressing the need for productive employment, continues to be a slow process. Social integration is eluding our grasp. In fact, the goals set at Copenhagen seem at times to be a distant hope.

One factor that has certainly had a major impact on social development, particularly within the developing countries, has been the process of globalization and liberalization. It has clearly accentuated the development problems of the developing countries, such as access to markets, financial resources and technology, and has prematurely opened up many economies, exposing them to overwhelming competition. It is a telling sign that growth in the developing world is decreasing at this moment in history of great change and innovation.

If the international community is sincere in its pronouncements for social development, then certainly we must work to redress the existing asymmetries and imbalances in the global economy. In this connection, Indonesia calls on the international community to reduce the negative effects of the financial crisis by, inter alia, assisting developing countries in strengthening their domestic capital markets. This must include measures to deal with short-term capital flows and the volatility they bring to financial markets. To achieve this, developing countries should participate to a greater extent in the decision-making processes of international financial institutions.

At the same time, many developing countries continue to face the crushing burden of debt and debt-servicing. We hope that this issue will be resolved in an expeditious manner, as it remains a serious obstacle for

many countries in implementing their commitments. Indonesia welcomes such initiatives as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative to comprehensively address the debt burden of the least developed countries. This needs to be expanded to meet the needs of all countries concerned and must be implemented as soon as possible.

Among the crucial and essential requirements foreseen at Copenhagen in terms of implementation and follow-up were efforts to mobilize new and additional financial resources that are both adequate and predictable. Yet despite the commitment made, we continue to witness a decline in official development assistance, and financing for development remains problematic. Indonesia will be hosting a seminar in Jakarta this December on the issue of financing for development, which we expect to result in a substantive contribution to this perennial question.

Nowhere are the risks of globalization more evident than in the experiences of East Asia beginning in 1997. The financial crisis that struck the region had a devastating impact, rolling back the progress that had been made over decades and swelling the ranks of the poor. In Indonesia, the repercussions of the crisis were particularly severe, ushering in political change and social upheaval. Before the crisis, our economic growth had averaged 8 per cent per year, and we had been poised to implement the 10 commitments made at Copenhagen. By the end of 1997, of all the affected East Asian economies, Indonesia was the hardest hit by the crisis. Our banking system had virtually collapsed, our corporate sector was financially crippled, and production had taken a nosedive. Inflation spiralled to an astronomical 78 per cent, so that at the end of 1998, the country was saddled with a negative growth rate of more than 13 per cent. As a result, millions of our people and their families lost their livelihoods and fell below the poverty line. However, by the end of 1999, our economic growth rate had picked up again and stood at 0.23 per cent. We are expecting this positive growth to improve further and to reach 3 to 4 per cent this year.

The Indonesian Government, despite three decades of vigorous work to achieve economic and social development, was unable to cope with the overwhelming financial losses and lost its legitimacy. In its place a new reform Government has successfully faced the challenge of the economic collapse and simultaneously constructed a more democratic and transparent political structure. We have achieved a measure of success on all counts.

Regardless of the setbacks of recent years, let me be clear in stating that Indonesia's determination to achieve the goals enunciated at Copenhagen has not weakened. We remain committed to eradicating poverty and to creating an enabling environment for social development. First and foremost, the new reform Government of Indonesia is strengthening the country's political and legal structures. We are putting in place a transparent and accountable system of governance and administration in all sectors of society, as the indispensable foundation for the realization of social and people-centred sustainable development. Supporting all of this is the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and adherence to the rule of law.

In 1998, the Government of Indonesia introduced its "Integrated Movement on the Eradication of Poverty", a people-centred approach. This movement employs three strategies. The first focuses not only on improving industries, but also on the people and how to empower the family; the second is to acknowledge the sociocultural diversity of the nation and adopt decentralized policies for development programmes; the third is for development programmes to encourage an independent network of stakeholders.

It is equally important for the new reform Government of Indonesia to address the expansion of productive employment. This is being done through such means as soft loans to the self-employed, the enhancement of micro-enterprises and the creation of employment through the adoption of labour-intensive projects.

One of the most significant features of Indonesia's efforts to enhance the social conditions of the country is the significant progress that is being made in the promotion and protection of human rights. We are now well into the National Plan of Action on Human Rights covering the period 1998-2003. The progress achieved includes the ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) core conventions, which deal, among other things, with the issue of the worst forms of child labour. We are also currently in the process of ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

We in Indonesia realize that neither social nor economic development will progress far in the absence of equality for women in the workplace, at home and in society. If we can improve access to health care for women and children, if we can enhance levels of education for girls as well as boys, if we can develop a sociocultural environment for equality, then our social and economic policies and programmes will greatly benefit.

In closing, let me express my delegation's sincere wish for this special session of the General Assembly not to end as an exercise in rhetoric, but to help to restore momentum for social development. In such times of unprecedented wealth and creativity, it would be unconscionable for the desperate calls for development to go unheeded.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Raúl Patiño Aroca, Minister for Social Welfare of Ecuador.

Mr. Patiño Aroca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to address the Assembly in my capacity as Minister for Social Welfare and social policy coordinator of the Government of Ecuador, a country that allocates 81 per cent of its revenue to foreign debt-servicing.

I should like to begin my statement by saying that, a few days ago, a teacher at a day-care centre for children under six told me emotionally, almost weeping, that Luisito, an abandoned child whom she had accepted into her centre when he was three, had invited her to his graduation. Luisito was already 11 years old and had ended his primary education. The emotion of this teacher of so-called "street children" was due to the fact that Luisito was the best student of the school, to whom fell the honour of hoisting the national flag.

The teacher asked me: "Minister, how many millions of children like Luisito are there in Ecuador and throughout the world who, because they have received no love or education, are doomed for life to have no jobs or hope?" I answered that I did not know how many Luisitos there are in the world, but that there are more than 1 million in Ecuador.

Yes, regretfully, I must recognize that the years that have elapsed since the Copenhagen Summit have seen a regression for our country in its struggle to reduce and eradicate poverty. Unfortunately, most of the targets set and commitments undertaken at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development have remained unfulfilled.

The number of poor, which in 1995 stood at 3.9 million, has risen to 8.5 million in 2000. This means that approximately 70 per cent of the population is poor. In the same period, the number of indigents, the poorest of the poor, rose almost threefold, from 1.4 million to 3.2 million — that is, to 34 per cent of the population of Ecuador. The rate of unemployment has risen from 6.9 per cent to 15 per cent, while underemployment increased from 45.8 per cent to 52 per cent in the same period.

The armed conflict of 1995 with our Peruvian brothers, which, happily, has been settled; the El Niño phenomenon of 1997-1998; the fall in oil prices; misguided internal policies; the collapse of 70 per cent of the banking and financial system; and, above all, the crushing debt burden have had a significant impact on the current crisis in our country, which is considered to be the worst in 50 years.

Ecuador is among those countries of Latin America with the greatest inequalities in the distribution of wealth. The poorest 10 per cent receive barely 1 per cent of the national income, of which the richest 10 per cent receive 44 per cent.

Among the factors I have cited, there is also a structural one related to the implementation of a model for development that goes beyond respect to worship for the marketplace and considers it capable alone of generating work, well-being and opportunities for all. This exclusive model has had nefarious results in our country and in many others of the so-called third world. It has brought us an unprecedented economic crisis, generated an enormous increase in poverty — with a consequent rupture of the social fabric — and created conditions of extreme political instability.

This is also, however, a moral crisis. Ethical and human values have been mercilessly displaced by the monetary and corruption has begun to take root in our society. Significant efforts have been made, however, in respect of the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples, women and children. In that regard, our political charter is among the most advanced of our region.

Debt has become the main obstacle to our development and is the result of a perverse system.

This burden is stifling us and many countries of the third world. That is why we endorse the statement made by His Holiness Pope John Paul II, who described debt as immoral and as constituting a tool of political pressure, responsible for undoing all the work of the peoples of the third world over the past two decades without offering anything in exchange.

We ask this forum to take a stance on the inhuman and unfair conditions that require us to comply with debt payments and prevent developing countries like mine from assuming their responsibilities for the weakest strata of society and from meeting international obligations, such as those we assumed five years ago in Copenhagen. We stress the urgent need to divert a significant share of the debt of developing countries into social investments, such as education, health, employment, environmental management and well-being programmes for the poorest groups.

The Government of President Gustavo Noboa firmly believes that simple economic growth is not enough to ensure human development. We believe that the policy of economic growth must be inextricably linked to that of social development. That is why, after only five months in power, we have drafted a social emergency plan covering 1 million women, 2 million workers and half a million retirees. We intend to reach 2 million children struggling against malnutrition and poverty. Our challenge is to defend our human capital. In setting this plan in motion, we have received the immediate support of the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and other bodies, which we thank.

The Government of Ecuador has made a commitment before the nation that I wish to ratify today at this meeting on social development. We will significantly increase social investment in respect of the past five years. We will set in motion a national plan of emerging employment. We will accelerate tax reform as an urgent mechanism for the redistribution of wealth. We will fight the corruption that has been an endemic evil in our country. We will strengthen the social front. We will promote the organization of the poor, which is the basis of the success of our plan. We will call for a broad national dialogue that will allow us to trade expediency for long-term policies. Ultimately, we will hoist the banner of justice. Yes, justice is what Ecuador and the world most need.

It is not fair that our countries continue to take on more debt in order to repay their debts. It is not fair that millions of mothers and fathers wet their pillows with their tears during the night because they do not know how they are going to feed their children the next day. It is not fair that we have to target 81 per cent of our public income to debt-servicing — 81 per cent of our income to repay debts. It is not fair that we lack sufficient resources for programmes to reduce poverty.

We raise our voice in this world forum because we are convinced that the desire to combat poverty and struggle for justice is shared by all of us at this special session.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Tamam El-Ghul, Minister of Social Development of Jordan.

Mrs. El-Ghul (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I begin by thanking the Government of Switzerland for its wonderful welcome and by wishing this session success, on behalf of King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein II.

We have to see what has prevented our implementing the Declaration and Programme of Action of Copenhagen, and to see what new initiatives can be taken to fulfil the obligations and commitments that were entered into at the time of that Summit.

A national plan of action has been drawn up in order to follow up on the commitments of the Copenhagen conference. This plan was drawn up with the participation of all the sectors that are concerned with social development in the Kingdom of Jordan. Our nation has a plan, including policies and programmes, to eradicate poverty at its root by meeting society's basic needs. This will strengthen the family, promote the status of women and reinforce women's role in every sphere. Women will play a greater part in social, political and economic life. With the broadening of the pool of productive workers, there will be greater employment and training opportunities. This can help the most vulnerable and underprivileged groups, such as young people, the handicapped and women.

As for social integration policies, there are programmes to support the family — every member of the family. Special attention has to be paid to dysfunctional families and the handicapped, who have to be brought into the mainstream of society. We cannot allow the breakdown of the family to continue.

Governments have to promote education and social and health services for all, and they have to be in a position to do so. There has to be social security coverage for everybody, and a safety net to enable small enterprises to become self-sufficient. All of this demands cooperation with civic society, which plays an important role in mobilizing Governments to achieve social development. Social solidarity, partnership and development go hand in hand. All bodies and entities need to be used to imbue society with democracy and freedom of expression.

In the area of social development, much remains to be done. All strata of society need to be involved. We have to look at the situation of refugees, because we have had three waves of forced immigration in the last 50 years, and the Government is continuing to provide the necessary services for those refugees despite its limited resources.

Our country firmly believes that we are an integral part of the world at large, and we have translated our faith into practice by allowing liberalization and restructuring of the economy, so as to meet the needs of deregulation and globalization. This was a very costly undertaking, because the models are on a macro scale, and because many resources need to be mobilized for development, but a large part of these resources now go to debt repayment.

The same is true regarding the liberalization of international trade. Lower tariff barriers have strengthened the role of the private sector, but they have not as yet paid off. The developed countries have imposed technical and administrative procedures, with the result that our commodities cannot reach the markets of the industrial countries.

This problem is not peculiar to Jordan; it is a problem for most developing countries. Openness, liberalization and the development of telecommunications have, indeed, created the global village. But it was thought that benefits for all would emerge from this development. This has not happened. The gap between the haves and the have-nots has widened, whether we are speaking of finances, information or technological know-how.

Unless the progress attained in development and prosperity can be made to benefit everyone, we are going to be facing real difficulties. The financial and monetary crisis in South-East Asia caused panic around the world. This should have been a warning signal to everyone to adopt, multilaterally, the necessary measures so that we can pursue global economic and social goals in a harmonious fashion in order to ensure that everyone enjoys the fruits of our labours. There should not be different categories or classes of countries in the world.

If we look at what is happening as a result of globalization, we realize that what is called for is interdependency and cooperation, at both the regional and international levels. This is particularly true if we want the world to be a global village that works for everyone. We should work as members of a small community to ensure that problems are addressed and that everyone stands to benefit. We should act as a single entity, as parts or members of the same body. We cannot have luxury on the one hand and abject poverty on the other. We need pragmatic policies that will bring into effect the Copenhagen commitments.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Elisabeth Sickl, Minister for Social and Intergenerational Affairs of Austria.

Ms. Sickl (Austria): At the outset, let me join the previous speakers in congratulating the President of the General Assembly on his election.

The review and appraisal of the past five years shows an ambivalent picture of social development with regard to the targets set in Copenhagen in 1995. Despite considerable progress made in some countries, there is still an enormous overall deficit in meeting the objectives of Copenhagen. Two of the most important achievements of the Copenhagen Summit were to confirm social development as one of the three columns of sustainable development and to place people at the centre of policy-making. Now, five years after the Copenhagen Summit, we realize how much effort is still needed until inequality is replaced by solidarity, as the Secretary-General puts it in his excellent report to the special session.

In fighting poverty, we need to improve opportunities for social participation and eliminate inequalities. The elimination of inequalities requires the enhancement of systems of social protection, and in doing that special attention has to be given to the most vulnerable groups of society. Together with its European Union partners, Austria is currently in the process of modernizing its social protection system.

At this point, I would like to stress that Austria fully supports the statement made by the Portuguese Presidency on behalf of the European Union.

Successful integration policies should be measured according to the degree of social protection and integration into the labour market offered to women, the young, the elderly and the handicapped. Fundamental social rights have to be granted without discrimination on the basis of origin or sex. They must include access to education and training, to the labour market, to health care, to appropriate housing and to care centres for children and the elderly. This is a particular challenge for policy makers at all levels.

It is unacceptable that specific groups of people are already threatened by social marginalization at an early age. In this context, the link between lacking or insufficient education, as well as training, and the lack of opportunities offered by society is likely to become even more apparent in the future. The objectives of guaranteeing all young people adequate training and of giving disadvantaged young people a second chance through such supportive measures as informal education and training, will increasingly become a major concern and challenge in policy-making.

Access to gainful employment for all employable adults has to be granted by means of lifelong learning, including vocational retraining. Elderly people should be empowered to participate in social life as long as they wish to do so, including through participation in voluntary activities. In this context we look forward to the outcome of the International Year of Volunteers.

I consider myself privileged to be able to say that Austria is a country with a very low level of youth unemployment. Also, for the elderly, the social network is tightly knit. Still, we will have to continue working with great sensitivity towards reconciling conflicting interests between generations. Currently a heated debate is going on in Austria on how to secure the pension system in the long run. I am personally committed to a reform concept that will convince our younger generation of the stability and sustainability of our pension system.

For families, social security is closely connected with the support they receive from the Government while their children are at the infant stage. Moreover, it is highly important that conditions in the labour market are becoming more family-friendly, thereby enabling mothers and fathers to combine and enjoy both spheres of life. Hence, the Austrian Government will offer parents real freedom of choice by introducing a child-care allowance as an adequate framework making it possible to attain satisfactory family and professional lives alike.

Participation and solidarity constitute important pillars of the Copenhagen commitments. Solidarity at the national level, through participation in transparent and democratic governance, has to be matched by solidarity across borders. In the last 45 years Austria, with a population of 8 million people, has given temporary harbour to more than 2 million refugees and has granted 650,000 persons the permanent right to stay in the country. Based on the number of inhabitants, this is more than in any other country of the European Union. To give one concrete example, in the framework of a humanitarian initiative called Neighbour in Need, the Austrian population donated a non-tax-deductible total of $120 million to the victims of the war in the former Yugoslavia.

Against this background, Austria welcomes the enlargement of the European Union as a chance for a peaceful and democratic Europe. But we also look far beyond the European borders. Austria is committed to the international development goal of cutting by half the number of people living in extreme poverty by the year 2015. Indeed, combating poverty is the first priority of Austrian development cooperation. And we are convinced that the struggle against poverty is both necessary and possible. It is necessary because economic growth and the much-hoped for trickle-down effect resulting from it are usually not sufficient to make the poor rise above the poverty line quickly and irreversibly. Targeted measures that reach these people directly are therefore required to contribute to their empowerment.

Secondly, the fight against poverty is possible. The means and strategies for a successful fight against poverty are available and will, if properly applied, lead to the expected positive results. The additional benefit of a systematic struggle against poverty will have a preventive effect on violent conflicts, refugee flows and migration. At the same time, the associated costs to the international community will be cut considerably. Austria pursues a comprehensive strategy aimed at the eradication of the deeply rooted causes of poverty and underdevelopment, in compliance with the relevant debt relief agreements.

From the Austrian perspective, the effectiveness of all measures depends heavily on the cooperation of donors and the coherence of the measures taken, as well as the implementation of the principle of ownership and partnership. Decisions regarding the pace and orientation of the development process have to be taken by the Governments together with the people of the developing countries, because sustainable development and poverty reduction can be effective only where the people affected and their organizations are in the driver's seat.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Baria Al-Koudsi, Minister for Social Affairs and Labour of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mrs. Al-Koudsi (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): In the midst of the grief and sorrow prevailing throughout the Syrian Arab Republic after the loss of our great leader, Hafez Al-Assad, we have come here to participate in the work of the special session of the General Assembly, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world".

I should like first of all to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who have expressed their condolences for our loss, in particular the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and all the members of the General Assembly.

At the outset, I should like to convey to the President of the General Assembly the greetings of the Government and the people of the Syrian Arab Republic, together with our sincere hope that this special session will be successful and that we will be able to achieve the objectives that we seek.

Five years after the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, we are meeting today in Geneva in order to evaluate our performance and to review together the plans that we formulated and our attempts to dissipate the waves of fear, poverty, instability and insecurity that pervaded the world in the wake of certain events. The objective of this conference is to obtain social development for everyone in a globalizing world. In addressing the question of social development, we in Syria have based our approach on the premise that the human being is the starting point and objective of life and on a number of other fundamental principles, the most important of which include the adoption of balanced and sustainable economic and social policies, the adaptation of our development policies to our specific requirements and to regional and international variables, the full utilization of our production capacity, the acceleration of economic and social processes through economic pluralism and the development of our technological and scientific capabilities. With that as a basis, our social and economic development plans have focused on developing resources and raising the living standards of human beings in material, social, cultural and health terms, because humankind is the tool, objective and means of development.

In combating poverty, the Government of Syria has adopted a number of national economic and social policies and programmes. They all focus on mobilizing all of our resources and capabilities with the aim of using them economically to complete the development of the agricultural and industrial sectors, modernize our transport and communication sectors and support small producers. We have also sought to provide food subsidies for the low-income sector of society. The Government has also concentrated on providing free health care and education for all citizens, and we now extend social security services to poor and vulnerable segments of society, including those with disabled family members, orphans and the elderly. In doing so, we cooperate with non-governmental organizations. We have also formulated a national plan to raise nutritional standards and to put an end to hunger. We are organizing a number of workshops in cooperation with the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in order to put an end to poverty. In cooperation with UNDP, we have also agreed on a draft policy for carrying out a field study to comprehensively define poverty in Syria.

On labour and our labour force, the Syrian Constitution stipulates that it is necessary to provide work opportunities for all citizens. The Government has sought to organize labour relations through the adoption of a number of laws to protect labourers and workers, and many provisions have been included for the protection of women and adolescents. Women are given the same treatment as men, without discrimination. The State also enshrines the principle of equal opportunity, including for the disabled. With regard to migrant workers, refugees and displaced persons, the Government also ensures that there is work for Palestinian refugees, who are given the same treatment as Syrian labourers.

All migrant Arab labourers working in Syria are treated in the same way as Syrian workers, and other foreigners are treated on a reciprocal basis. The Government's social policy supports the principle of increasing employment and facilitating access to work opportunities through investment in education and training. The educational policy focuses on providing equal educational opportunities for males and females and compulsory primary education, and establishing links between the educational and developmental objectives and the eradication of illiteracy. We have increased our emphasis on training and rehabilitation and established specialized centres designed to respond to the requirements of social and economic development in various fields and to increase both the number and the quality of skills necessary for fulfilling our responsibilities.

The Syrian political leadership has sought to enhance the role of women and to increase their participation and encourage their productive role in economic life. We founded a committee for businesswomen in 1999 in order to organize women's efforts and further activate their role in industrial development. Syrian Arab women continue to gain access to positions of high authority and decision-making.

With regard to social welfare, the Constitution of our country has always concentrated on the concept of social welfare without distinction between citizens in terms of sex, religion, language or belief, because all citizens are equal before the law with regard to their rights and responsibilities. Syria gives special attention to the family because it is the basic nucleus of society, and the country continues to make every effort to extend full support to the family.

We have accorded the question of the disabled particular attention and established a number of institutes, schools and centres in order to provide educational and training opportunities for all categories of disabled people. The percentage of disabled people who work in various State institutions must be no less than 4 per cent, and we are currently seeking to increase the number of jobs allocated to the disabled to 6 per cent.

In caring for the elderly, we have formulated a national plan to extend health and social services to the elderly and have established nursing homes to provide for their welfare and health. The Government has also accorded special attention to the housing sector so as to secure decent housing for families, because housing is a basic requirement for human beings and provides them with dignity and security. We have therefore provided support for cooperative housing and a financial programme to provide banking facilities. We rely on modern technology in the planning and implementation of our housing projects, and have passed a number of laws in order to facilitate construction by the public sector.

The Government has also made efforts to extend the full coverage of basic services to all our citizens as part of their basic health needs, with particular emphasis on the more vulnerable groups, such as mothers and children. With regard to the services provided to migrant workers, refugees and displaced persons, we in Syria have suffered greatly as a result of foreign occupation, which constitutes a great obstacle to the enjoyment of basic human rights. Citizens, particularly women, in the occupied Golan suffer greatly as a result of the repressive practices of the Israeli authorities.

Syria has underlined in a number of forums that the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace and of stability in our region is an essential part of the basic conditions to achieve development and equality so as to alleviate all forms of suffering under which Syrian women have been living in the Golan and other occupied Arab territories.

However, Israel, which claims before the whole world that it is working for peace in the Middle East, has rejected adherence to the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, which are based on relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace. Without such resolutions and principles there can be no just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Syria once again reiterates that its strategic option is a just and comprehensive peace, and this should also be Israel's option. We have to consider the fact that Syria will not cede even one grain of its national soil. From this rostrum, we urge the international community to support Syria in its endeavours for an end to the occupation, for Israel's full withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967 and for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which stipulate the restoration of occupied territories to Syria, ensuring

the return of Syrian inhabitants to their land and property and allowing them to utilize their natural resources in order to attain full social development.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Graciela Fernandez Meijide, Minister of Social Development of Argentina.

Mrs. Fernández Meijide (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The 1990s are engraved on the collective memory of the Argentine people as a double-edged decade. While structural reform opened the doors of our economy to the world and improved its productivity, the method for effecting such reform only widened the social gap to an unprecedented extent. Narrowing that gap is the main goal of the new Government of Mr. Fernando de la Rúa, who was recently elected. The national Government's work towards this goal is focused on reinforcing the institutional skills of both public and private bodies involved in social development.

It was to this end that the Ministry of Social Development and Environment was established on the same day that the newly elected authorities were inaugurated. This decision was the first step in a strategy that considers social policy an integrated form of action towards full enjoyment of the benefits of citizenship by the population at large. The need to integrate social policies stems from an assessment of the dispersion that characterized them in the 1990s: the country once had 66 social programmes in different national Ministries. This dispersion is absolutely dysfunctional in terms of effectiveness and transparency in social policy. The keys to our strategy are the integration of programmes, the creation of a unified record of beneficiaries and the development of a broad political consensus including every provincial government, regardless of the party to which it may belong. This is the approach that Argentina has developed to face the serious social situation that characterizes our country today. We are sure that it will also provide new conditions for the effective channelling of resources coming from international organizations, whose contribution and cooperation are essential for Argentina nowadays.

Next to a hard core of social exclusion, the so-called structural poverty, a new kind of poverty has grown as a social phenomenon, as it has in other countries, and has affected middle-class households that had been used to living off a steady, well-paying job before sudden, abrupt economic changes left them verging on the edge of survival. This issue, which had not occupied an important position in the social policy agenda of the 1990s, was addressed through the integration of local development programmes. Our goal is the complete productive reintegration of that sector, supported by its own self-empowerment.

In Argentina, there are more than 2 million indigent people — that is to say, they belong to households where the monthly income is no more than $67 per member. The persistence and replication of this situation over time is not only unacceptable from an ethical point of view but also represents a serious threat to overall social harmony. In order to tackle this serious problem, the new Government is about to put into practice its most important social development programme yet: the integrated plan to combat exclusion.

The programme will target 455,000 households that live under the aforementioned conditions. Its main goal is to contribute to the disruption of the vicious cycle whereby extreme poverty replicates itself; and this will be accomplished by preventing the children of these households, lacking nourishment, health care and education, from replicating the impoverished conditions under which they were brought up when they start their own families. This plan will be implemented by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Development and Environment, which together will provide the scholarships, primary health-care services and food necessary for children's development. As ours is a federal Government, I repeat that it is essential for the national, provincial and municipal governments to work jointly. The conceptual basis of the plan is to make sure that the family itself assumes responsibility in the struggle to overcome poverty; each household will continue to benefit from the programme as long as it complies with its obligations in terms of the health and nourishment of every member and ensures that the children and teenagers attend school regularly.

The first stage of the plan will be put into operation in July of this year, and it will allow us to assess the implementation methodology in such a way as to guarantee the achievement of the programme's goals for all the people involved. The fact that three Ministries committed to social development are cooperating in this field represents a major institutional

innovation in our country; it had been proposed many times in the past but never fully realized.

While we are carrying out these strategic innovations, we will not cease even for one day to assist the most disadvantaged families or neglect our duties if either a social or a climatic emergency should arise. We will perform the tasks that any such emergency may call for, and, at the same time, we will continue working towards building a nation of free and responsible citizens who, with increased productivity and full employment, will no longer require public assistance.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdel Wahab Mohammad Al-Wazzan, Minister for Social Affairs and Labour and Minister of Commerce and Industry of Kuwait.

Mr. Al-Wazzan (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the pleasure to convey to the Assembly the greetings of His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and it is an honour for me to represent him in delivering the speech of Kuwait before this forum.

Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your shouldering of the responsibility of the presidency of this important session, and I am confident that your ability, skills and efficiency will steer the meetings to the best results. I am honoured to present our thanks and gratitude to the head of the Swiss Government and the Swiss people for hosting this session.

The World Summit for Social Development, which was held by the United Nations in Copenhagen in March 1995, was a turning point in the process of consolidating the commitment of States and Governments to social development. It underlined the necessity for domestic strategies in every country to ameliorate conditions for its people.

The principal elements of the Declaration are aimed at eradicating poverty and unemployment, achieving full employment and social integration and paving the way for societies to live in security, stability and justice. By their quest for social development over the past several years and through their presence today in this meeting, the participating States are showing their desire to improve the social conditions of their peoples. This is becoming attainable through social policies that can no longer be independent of economic development strategies. Social and economic developments complement each other.

The question of development, in its various forms, was of primary concern to the State of Kuwait even before the issuance of the Copenhagen Declaration. Since then, the right to development has become a major issue in the human rights sphere, and the State has exerted endless efforts to create the appropriate conditions to realize this right.

The State of Kuwait is currently in the process of modifying and modernizing its laws in order to attain conformity with the Declaration. Indeed, many laws were decreed to achieve the goals of social and economic development. Among them are laws concerning intellectual property, copyrights, the protection of the environment, the regulation of foreign investments, activating the national workforce and care for persons with disabilities, and the law of 1996 approving the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The selection of Kuwait as the Capital of Arab Culture for the year 2001 came as a culmination of this wise policy.

Kuwait realizes that globalization is a double-edged weapon. Though many countries are ready to rapidly reap benefits from the positive effect of globalization on their economy and social environment, other countries, especially the least developed countries, are less capable of joining globalization and may suffer from its negative consequences.

In addition, there are new social phenomena such as violence, drugs and trafficking of weapons and other internationally banned materials that hamper social development at international, regional and national levels.

We believe in the need for a new mechanism for international cooperation and coordination, headed by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, to combat these social phenomena that threaten international and national security and stability. We want this mechanism to be included in our decisions during this session.

Since its independence, the State of Kuwait has believed that social development cannot be attained without active economic progress. Thus, Kuwait is pursuing its march to support development projects in many countries around the world through official development assistance. The amount of our official

assistance to such projects is between 4 per cent and 5 per cent of our gross national product, which far exceeds the 0.7 per cent stipulated by Commitment of the Declaration.

Many Kuwaiti non-governmental institutions, including welfare organizations, present monetary and in-kind charity aid to some developing countries to support their social development.

In pursuing its policy to alleviate the debt burden on developing countries, Kuwait issued a law in 1995 cancelling loan repayments owed by some developing countries as well as cancelling the interest imposed on other ones. This gesture underlines the eagerness of my country to participate effectively in elevating the standard of living in these poor nations.

One of the means to implement the principles and goals of the Copenhagen Declaration, set out in paragraph 26, subparagraph (u), is to

> "Emphasize the importance of the return of all prisoners of war, persons missing in action and hostages to their families, in accordance with international conventions, in order to reach full social development."

In this respect, Kuwait recalls with great pain and would like to remind the Assembly that there are Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners of war and detainees still being held by Iraqi authorities. They have now been held for about 10 years. Such acts constitute a violation of international law and norms. We are hoping for more pressure on Iraq to release the Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners of war and detainees, to cooperate with the United Nations organs and with the International Committee for the Red Cross and to implement the relevant international resolutions.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Anthony Dessources, Minister for Planning and External Cooperation of Haiti.

Mr. Dessources (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): In my capacity as Minister for Planning and External Cooperation and head of the Haitian delegation, may I express cordial greetings from Mr. René Garcia Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti. I should also like to congratulate the President of the Assembly on his election and wish him every success on carrying out his duties. I wish to thank most particularly the Swiss Government for the much-appreciated support given the Republic of Haiti to enable it to take part in this session and for the warm welcome we have been given here.

The twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, under the heading "achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", is another link in the chain of ongoing deliberations of countries that have a resolute desire to take part in the fight against poverty or that have been earnestly supporting that fight. Some countries have already implemented plans of action, and this session enshrines a number of advances they have achieved, through their plans of action, in terms of governance and social protection. It also shows the scope of the challenges that nations face in their choice of policies for a better distribution of the fruits of economic growth. This is also a forum for evaluating the various countries' actions and public policies for wider social justice.

After the Copenhagen Summit, the Republic of Haiti concentrated its efforts to promote social programmes in the country by strengthening the provisions already in place under the national public investment programme, which gives priority to social justice, public security, education and increased health services, through rural health centres.

The Government has used its meagre tax revenue to modernize the national hospital system, develop the educational infrastructure and build roads.

The country's institutional crisis paralysed the Government's programme due to the non-ratification of loan agreements, particularly those negotiated with multilateral development agencies. Nonetheless, prospects are good for the relaunching of the programme and a return to institutional normality. This is the framework in which the legislative elections were held on 21 May last, with a view to re-electing two thirds of the Senate of the Republic and of electing representatives and leaders of the regional authorities. The second round is scheduled for 9 July.

The Government's strategic plan to put together a wide-ranging long-term development programme was discussed at length at the follow-up meeting to the Copenhagen Summit held in Trinidad and Tobago September last.

The principal results achieved relate to the setting up of a universal schooling programme for all children between the ages of 3 and 12; the promotion and

expansion of the national programme that provides school lunches; the broadening of the credit base for vulnerable segments of society, such as farmers, women who have street stalls and small businessmen; the broadening of the scope of the decentralized credit programme; the mechanization of agriculture; and the modernization of the public transportation system.

However, despite the diverse actions taken by the Government, the strategy to combat poverty is not yielding particularly good results given the prevailing financial difficulties. The Government, which has a minimal credit limit and is determined to abide by established budgetary norms, is making enormous financial sacrifices so as not to pass on the rising costs of petroleum products to the vulnerable segments of the population. The State must therefore bear these costs along with operating expenses and debt-servicing.

The Government is committed to pursuing the programme to combat poverty. Actions that have had encouraging results will be taken up again in the operational phase of the long-term development strategy, the outline of which has been drawn up in the framework of the joint assessment of countries carried out with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme.

The Government intends to take the following principal actions in the framework of that long-term strategy: first, adopt an economic policy based on the creation of the necessary conditions for the growth of private investment, with a view to expanding national wealth and creating lasting and stable jobs; secondly, adopt a decentralization policy aimed at the capacity-building of local authorities in order to allow them to take charge of socio-economic development in their communities; thirdly, encourage participation of local populations in drawing up programmes and projects; and fourthly, adopt a policy of integration for non-governmental organization programmes.

It should be stressed that the implementation of this strategy is based on a national capacity-building programme in the area of statistics, which will make it possible to gather reliable data for the establishment of a poverty map. This basic instrument will enable the Government to identify areas of poverty and to set priorities in order to better target its actions.

The President returned to the Chair.

The Government of the Republic, as the Secretary-General stated in his opening statement to the special session, must invest in people so as to do away with the spectre of poverty once and for all.

The combat against poverty must be universal. All countries should commit themselves to that struggle. Developed countries must help the third world countries to reap the fruits of globalization, as thus far globalization has benefited only a small number of countries. The combat against poverty means working to overcome the marginalization of the third world countries so as to prevent problems related to migration, transnational crime and social violence, which themselves are obstacles to progress and civilization.

The Republic of Haiti, as is clear, is determined, at the dawn of the third millennium, to join the ranks of those nations characterized by economic modernization and democracy. In this respect, it is convinced that in order to attain these goals it must strengthen its development capacity through greater regional integration and through the effective decentralization of its resources in a framework of dynamic cooperation.

The Haitian delegation strongly supports the statements made by certain delegations concerning the allocation of 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product of the richer countries to official development assistance. It is in this spirit that the delegation of Haiti supports the statement to be made by the representative of La Francophonie on behalf of the French-speaking countries.

We are engaged in a new form of cooperation with the Republic of Cuba in the area of health care and medical training. This experience has clearly shown the benefits of South-South cooperation. This approach is seldom used, however, because the poorer countries cannot benefit from the available expertise without the necessary resources. Accordingly, the Republic of Haiti requests the donor countries to consider, in devising their strategies, the financing of the poorer countries' technical cooperation programmes aimed at implementing social development projects. This is another form of support for the least developed countries in their combat against poverty.

Haiti, the poorest among the countries of the Americas, is determined to take this historic

opportunity once and for all to eradicate the spectre of poverty. This twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly on social development is the ideal forum for supporting the steps already taken by countries, or groups of countries, towards forgiving the debt burden of the poorest countries, including Haiti's.

In the name of international solidarity, and on behalf of my country, I have the honour to submit to the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly the request of the Republic of Haiti that the debt of all the poor countries be written off or converted into investments to support social programmes.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ruben Shugarian, Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia.

Mr. Shugarian (Armenia): As we reflect on the years that have elapsed since the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, we find ourselves today at the crossroads of globalization and of a new information age that is bridging geographic distances, transcending borders and replacing traditional sources of global wealth.

Since the Copenhagen Summit, the course of development in world society has highlighted the importance of giving the highest priority to social development and adequate standards for the well-being of all in building up the democracies of the twenty-first century.

The outcome of the World Summit focuses on recognizing social development as a political priority, even if the achievement of the goals of the Summit promises to be a lengthy and complex process.

The Summit reaffirmed that social development should be an integral part of domestic policy, and that Governments bear responsibility for all national economic programmes because of their important social consequences. The decisions of the 1995 Summit assigned concrete tasks and defined common approaches to ensure further social progress in improving living conditions throughout the world. Although non-mandatory, these decisions set standards that represent the goals for the next century for worldwide social development.

In order to evaluate to what extent the Summit objectives have been implemented, one should concentrate on the progress made since Copenhagen. In this regard, this special session offers an excellent opportunity to share positive experiences and to examine the existing obstacles and difficulties. It also allows us to review the ability of nations to adequately address major social challenges.

Today, it is evident that all countries of the world — advanced, developing or transitional — are substantially affected by globalization. Specialization and the further widening of markets through trade, division of labour and a more efficient and diversified allocation of financial resources should increase overall productivity and raise living standards. However, no country can benefit from this trend spontaneously.

The major tasks faced by Governments are to pursue sound policies of structural adjustment, to meet social challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities that globalization offers today. Domestic economic planning and reforms are as essential as regional cooperation and integration for maximizing benefits and opportunities. Therefore, improvements in the social sphere must be an integral part of effective economic policies and programmes.

The World Summit for Social Development was also a landmark on the world community's road towards the advancement of international cooperation in the field of social development. We believe that the United Nations activities in social and economic fields should focus more on the specific requirements of countries with economies in transition in order to facilitate their integration into the world economic space by overcoming unavoidable obstacles inherent in the transitional period.

While shifting from a totalitarian regime to a democratic and open society, Armenia must simultaneously consolidate its State structures. Above all, it must improve its economic potential, set up a new social agenda as well as resolve the Karabakh conflict. What is most difficult is that Armenia must do all those things at the same time, for they are all, in fact, interdependent.

The period of economic transition in Armenia was characterized by the collapse in trade with Central Europe and the former Soviet Republics, followed by a drastic fall in production, a high rate of inflation and the erosion of incomes and purchasing power. Disproportion in the labour market had led to conditions in which the average salary did not even ensure minimal living conditions. The past Soviet

social policy system was no longer functional. It did not have the means to provide the social safety net of guarantees stipulated by the Armenian Constitution. According to some alarming estimates, the actual population of Armenia has decreased in size over the past five years. The emigration rate, which is due to the high unemployment rate, has produced demographic changes.

Just as in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe with economies in transition, the path to a market economy in Armenia has defined a number of issues of high priority for the Government. These issues were precisely those discussed and considered in Copenhagen back in 1995. During the past five years, the Armenian Government has implemented a complex programme aimed at improving the country's social environment. Certain structural changes were introduced, some having been incorporated into new legislation. The Government considers the elaboration of a State programme on social policy to be of major importance.

A strategic programme on the reduction of poverty has been launched in the country, some of the components of which are the promotion of economic activity, the reduction of unemployment, the improvement of the system of State administration, the strengthening of the anti-corruption campaign, and the improvement of the State services provided to the socially vulnerable groups of the population.

In line with the Prime Minister's decree of 1996 on improving social conditions, the Ministries of Social Security and Statistics put together a plan of action. A series of surveys were carried out, the results of which were used to improve the social security system. A commission on the methodology of calculating the minimum consumption basket was established by the Government in 1998. As a result, a methodology was developed, according to which the food and consumption budget was being calculated on a quarterly basis. On the basis of the work done, a system of family allowances was introduced in 1999. An interim document on the national strategy on the eradication of poverty was developed early this year, which underlined the priorities in social development and poverty eradication.

The policy of creating a favourable atmosphere for the operation of small- and mid-sized enterprises, in both the urban and the rural communities, and the fulfilment of all-encompassing State investment programmes are aimed at the reduction of poverty. This programme also envisages wider accessibility of social services, in particular those in the spheres of education and health care. These activities will, in their turn, create possibilities for full access to education and for improving the situation with the financing of the education system. Health care, and in particular children's health care, will be central in expanding the package of free health care services.

The vulnerable groups, such as refugees and internally displaced persons, are also in the focus of the Government's policies. From 1988 to 1993, some 300,000 refugees settled in Armenia as a result of the ethnic cleansing in neighbouring Azerbaijan. In addition, there are about 170,000 internally displaced persons as a result of both the earthquake and the systematic shelling of Armenia's border regions by Azerbaijan.

The Nagorny Karabakh conflict has had a negative impact on the social situation not only in Armenia, but in the region as a whole. Unlike Azerbaijan, Armenia has never politicized the social problems of the refugees and the internally displaced persons. The Government, with the help of the international community, has taken serious steps in addressing their needs.

Armenia today has some 200,000 unemployed. The introduction of the social security system will designate a qualitative change in the Government's policy and its transition from stopgap measures to a long-term strategy in addressing the poverty and unemployment issues. Another important programme that the Government is planning to launch is the encouragement of public works, which is also expected to become an important part of the anti-unemployment campaign. The Government is encouraging the increasing role of the non-governmental, charitable and religious organizations and funds, engaging in cooperation with many of them and even entrusting some spheres of social support to them.

One important step in social development is the training of appropriate specialists. None of the universities of Armenia had anything resembling a department of social services in the past. Exactly five year ago, the oldest school of Armenia — Yerevan State University — started teaching relevant subjects and this year we had the first class that graduated with

diplomas as specialists in social services. These graduates are our asset — students who have studied the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action as part of their curriculums and who are entering their professional lives with the aim of assisting the fulfilment of the Summit's decisions and the social development of Armenia, the region and the world at large.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rino Serri, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

Mr. Serri (Italy) (*spoke in Italian; English text furnished by the delegation*): The choices made in Copenhagen in 1995 marked a most important moment in international reflection on and discussion of development problems.

Some schools of thought tended to consider market mechanisms alone sufficient to solve economic and social development problems. In this respect, Copenhagen and the subsequent United Nations world conferences once more stressed the need to bring the approach to social problems back to the economic development basis: human development, the fight against poverty, unemployment and social isolation, the need for environmental protection and reproduction, a new role to be played by women, and children's rights.

Although we have started along this path, we are just at the beginning. There are still many obstacles and difficulties to be overcome and strategies to be redesigned.

First of all, I believe that experiences gained over the last few years have shown that the goals of development aid, anti-poverty measures and the promotion of human rights and human dignity cannot be effectively achieved unless the whole set of economic, financial and trade policies used in the world at large is brought to bear. This is even more true if we consider the globalization process, which has had an enormous impact on people's lives, as well as engendering widespread, albeit contradictory, movements and protests — as was the case, for example, in Seattle.

The question is not whether to prevent or stop the globalization process. However, it is now clear that the processes involved must be governed, both to achieve greater stability of economic growth and to guarantee that priority is given to human development and social and civic growth for every community.

This means that new relations have to be established at the global and regional levels among political authorities — beginning with the United Nations — and also among the financial, monetary and trade authorities. New, more representative and fairer balances of power must be created among developed and developing countries, and even more so with the least-developed countries, which still have far too little influence in decision-making mechanisms.

In this process, international agencies and organizations belonging to the United Nations or connected with it can play a part by providing inspiration, guidance and coordination, which should not be confined merely to technical or purely bureaucratic approaches. This is the only way that the objectives set at Copenhagen and subsequently can be met, since they lead to choices that affect the results of economic and financial policies and benchmarks.

It is necessary to move urgently in this direction. Humanitarian crises and emergencies risk moving faster than our ability to prevent and avoid them through courageous solutions, appropriate resources and a spirit of innovation. It suffices to think of the tragic aspects involved in migration flows — as was recently the case in Dover — and of the new criminal phenomena connected to them. Following the same line of thinking, we must tackle the new phase that is looming large for our work. It is our direct responsibility. The experience of the last few years teaches us at least three essential things.

First, it is increasingly necessary to move from development cooperation conceived as a sum of separate and independent projects to cooperation based on objectives and shared strategies and to coordinated actions which can be a point of reference to guide national and regional policies.

Secondly, it is necessary to seek a new dynamic between unified and coordinated initiatives, which, however, can go beyond rigidly sectoral, centralized and sometimes still purely welfare practices and encourage new participation by partners and their communities in a widespread and decentralized way. In this, all democratic institutions and the organized forms of civil society would play a new role. For these reasons Italy decided to organize, in coordination with this special session of the General Assembly, a special

event over two days to discuss decentralized cooperation.

The third lesson stems from the others. In today's world, because of the new interrelationships being created and of the new potential of communications and new technologies, it is of the utmost importance to find new forms of convergence and even integration between the private and public sectors, between economic and social events, business dynamics and community and solidarity or partnership values in the richest moments of social life. Along these lines, it will be useful also to think of new forms of international cooperation.

With its huge potential to devote resources to official development assistance, the European Union should provide the necessary contribution to achieve the objectives set in Copenhagen. This contribution might prove decisive for the Union's social and political culture. We are trying to achieve these objectives in the framework of the Council of Europe.

We are trying to get the Italian cooperation sector to be involved along these lines by going back to find ways of increasing resources for official development assistance and through a new balance between bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The latter is the most suitable tool for implementing the necessary innovations in development policy, provided that it avoids red tape and spurs a real dialogue among all of the protagonists.

To this end, Italy is already cooperating with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other international organizations to implement framework programmes for human development — programmes that are mutually coordinated in 14 countries of the world. For the year 2000 we have already allocated more than $150 million for new framework programmes explicitly designed to reduce poverty and achieve the other Copenhagen objectives.

Italy wants to support these new forms of cooperation, and therefore we have decided to participate in their launching through special financing made available to the trust funds set up by UNDP and the International Labour Organization (ILO). We urge the Secretary-General most warmly to continue consultations and efforts so that other partners will embark on this path, together with UNDP, ILO and other international organizations and agencies.

In conclusion, I would like to repeat that all of this will have a real impact if this special session in Geneva and the ensuing actions provide new impetus to upgrade, integrate and even amend political, economic, financial and trade policies, starting with the reduction and cancellation of debt. The writing off of debt should no longer be conceived as a "one-off" action, but rather as the beginning of a new phase which will prevent debt from increasing and which offers new sound and lasting bases for development, even for those countries and populations that up to now have remained, partially or completely, on the fringes of it.

The President. I now give the floor to His Excellency, Mr. Tatsuo Arima, Chairman of the delegation of Japan.

Mr. Arima (Japan): First, I should like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who have been involved in the preparations for this session, a special session to discuss the present state of social development as we face the twenty-first century.

The consensus that evolved at the World Summit for Social Development to "place people at the centre of development" has since then had a profound impact on all our activities in this important field of development. Since the Summit, however, so-called globalization — with its blessings notwithstanding — has bred a widening gap between the rich and the poor. The central concern of the measures we implement to cope with this situation has to be the protection of the livelihood and dignity of the individual. That is to say, we have to place our concern with human security at the very core of our actions for social development.

Japan, as the top donor of official development assistance for nine consecutive years, attaches particular importance to poverty reduction in developing countries. The poverty reduction efforts of developing countries should be supported by debt relief. Japan is firmly committed to the full cancellation of all official development assistance debt owed by heavily indebted poor countries under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative agreed upon at the Cologne Summit last year. It is urgent that the implementation of the Initiative be accelerated, and in this connection Japan decided this April to extend enhanced debt relief of up to 100 percent of non-official development assistance debt owed by eligible heavily indebted poor countries under the international framework, and to make a

contribution of up to $200 million to the HIPC Trust Fund of the World Bank.

In implementing debt relief it is important to ensure that resources released through debt relief are used effectively for the well-being of the people in the debtor countries. To this end, the participation of civil society and other parties concerned in this process is beneficial. The Government of Japan will implement its debt relief measures while taking into consideration the views of various parties such as non-governmental organizations and other actors of civil society. In the long run, however, developing countries must strengthen their debt management capacity and increase their ability to make the best use of available loans. For these purposes, Japan has organized debt management seminars since 1999 with the participation of African countries.

In our efforts to reduce poverty in developing countries, the importance of primary education and health, as well as the empowerment of women, cannot be overemphasized. Japan's mid-term policy on official development assistance, announced last year, attaches high priority to these areas. Japan will actively contribute to the promotion of quality basic education, with particular emphasis on the education of girls and in accordance with the Dakar Framework for Action adopted at the World Education Forum.

To contain the spread of infectious diseases, particularly of HIV/AIDS, Japan has implemented assistance amounting to about $100 million between fiscal years 1994 and 1998 under our Global Issues Initiative on Population and AIDS.

We also contributed $5.5 million in the 1999 fiscal year to relevant international organizations under our Women in Development Initiative.

Japan embraces the participatory approach in its grass-roots assistance to reduce poverty. In order to support the efforts of international financial institutions in this regard, Japan has decided to create funds for poverty reduction at the Asian Development Bank and at the World Bank, contributing nearly $94 million to each.

The promotion of social development, including social integration, is significant not only in itself but also as a long-term measure to address the root causes of conflicts. Recognizing the importance of the strong foundation that democracy provides for good governance in developing countries, Japan has implemented cooperation under what we call the Partnership for Democratic Development. In the five-year period that began in fiscal year 1994, Japan accepted 765 trainees to help their democratization efforts, and has provided electoral assistance in about 40 areas.

As we try to overcome our present economic impasse in Japan, we give priority to the creation of employment from the people-centred viewpoint. It is in the same vein that Japan's development cooperation focuses on vocational training, with particular emphasis on supporting women and the vulnerable segments of society.

Since 1997, the Asian economic crisis, in response to which Japan has to date pledged more than $80 billion in aid to help the Asian countries, has provided us with many lessons. Among them is the important role of the tripartite dialogue between Government, labour and employer organizations in forging an effective social consensus to overcome such crises. Japan hopes that the tripartite principle in the area of employment policy will be established universally.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) plays a major role in promoting social development, and its initiative in this area is gaining in importance. The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work is a vital instrument for promoting core labour standards worldwide. It is our strong wish that the ILO will continue to play a leading role in promoting these standards.

Today, the rapid advances in information technology are transforming the pattern of our lives, making them more efficient and perhaps even improving their quality. One of the keys to making the twenty-first century peaceful and prosperous is to ensure that those who have not been able to share in the blessings of this progress also benefit. Japan is making its best efforts in this regard and is exploring ways to help promote information technology in developing countries.

We have gathered here with the shared awareness of the limitations of the pursuit of economic development for its own sake, the dehumanizing impact of globalization, as it were. With this awareness in mind, here we will together formulate further actions

and initiatives. Japan pledges to do it utmost to contribute towards their fulfilment.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Lim Soo Hoon, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Community Development and Sports of Singapore.

Ms. Hoon (Singapore): Singapore is a city-State with a total population of about 3.9 million people in a land area of about 600 square kilometres. We have no natural resources except our people. We import about 60 per cent of our water needs and practically all of our foodstuffs. We live in a society that is multiracial, multireligious, multilingual and multicultural.

Given our circumstances, we believe that we must invest in our people and provide them with the opportunities for development and growth. We work very hard to remain cohesive as a people by carefully managing our diversity. Every Singaporean is imbued with the sense that rewards can be brought about only through hard work, based on the principles of meritocracy and self-reliance. We do not believe in social handouts. We believe the family is the basic building block of our society. It should be the first line of support in our social safety net if the individual needs help. Only if the family cannot help would we consider help from the community and the Government.

These principles, in brief, undergird Singapore's approach to policies on social development. Our approach is in line with the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration.

Singapore emphasizes the economic and social development of its people by mobilizing all sectors of our society: the Government, the voluntary sector, the private sector, the community, the family and individuals.

As I indicated earlier, we believe that strong and stable families are the bedrock of our society. Families impart positive values from generation to generation, determining the moral fibre of society and the success of our social development. The Government and the community can only help provide the environment for the family to thrive in. At the end of the day, it is the family itself which decides how it wants to grow.

A recent survey on the family in Singapore revealed that it is doing relatively well. Nevertheless, the family as an institution in Singapore will increasingly come under strain due to globalization. Working parents face the struggle to balance work and family. Singaporeans, especially the educated and career-minded, are postponing marriage and having fewer children or none at all. Like many other countries, we are also experiencing a decline in the fertility rate. Our total fertility rate is currently 1.49, way below the replacement rate of 2.1.

This has caused Singapore to have one of the fastest-ageing populations in the world. Although our population is relatively young today, it will change rapidly over the next 20 to 30 years. In 1999, 7 per cent of our population was elderly people. By 2030, 20 per cent, or one fifth of the population, will be aged 65 and above. This will put a lot of stress on the working adult members of the family, who will have to look after both the old and the very young. That is why we in Singapore are working very hard to try to restore the fertility rate and to prepare for an ageing population.

Economic development and social development go hand in hand. We have to increase the size of the economic pie if we want to feed people and keep their stomachs satisfied. Hence, the Singapore Government's priority has always been economic development. Currently, Singapore enjoys full employment, and all Singaporeans have access to basic services, such as, housing, health care and education.

For Singapore to compete effectively, it is necessary for our people to keep up with the needs of the changing global economy. The recent economic recession in Asia has reinforced the need for skills upgrading and retraining. The knowledge-based economy will transform the workplace, and workers have to be prepared to make the transition to the new economy.

We have always viewed education as a strategic investment. There is equal access to education for both males and females. Although education is not compulsory, school attendance is almost 100 per cent. This reflects the importance our people attribute to education as a means to having a better life.

To maximize resources for social development, the Singapore Government works closely with groups such as local administrations, grass-roots organizations, non-governmental organizations, voluntary welfare organizations, trade unions and other community groups to provide a comprehensive network of social services and programmes. We call this the

"many helping hands" approach. Assistance at the grass-roots level and with maximum community participation is most effect. Examples of social services offered by such organizations are counselling, educational programmes and financial assistance.

The Singapore Government plans, regulates and facilitates the provision of social services. It is a provider of and catalyst for social services. It allocates land or premises and resources and provides financial assistance. The State grants up to 90 per cent of the development costs and 50 per cent of recurrent costs of services developed and run by non-governmental organizations. It also provides advice on social services to the voluntary sector and civic and community groups.

This approach also contributes to building a cohesive and caring community. The spirit of volunteerism is valued and promoted strongly, as it helps develop a sense of identity and belonging in the community. It promotes a deeper sense of ownership and galvanizes resources for meeting social and community needs. The more able or talented are encouraged to help the less fortunate.

As in every society, there will always be a small segment of the population that will not be able to cope with their difficulties or that has no family or friends to turn to for help. The Government and the community will extend assistance, but in a way that will not develop a mentality of dependence and helplessness.

Those who require help are encouraged to increase their personal and social responsibility. The key thrust of Singapore's social policy is creating conditions for every Singaporean to have equal opportunities for education, a job and a home. Opportunities and support to help the disadvantaged rise to the same level as the rest of the population are available. This is done through education, training and skills upgrading, so that they can remain employable, and through a network of social services.

The Singapore Government, together with the community, tries to ensure that the disadvantaged are helped and that no one is marginalized. Basic needs such as accessible housing, education and medical care are regarded as part of the social safety net. Attention is given to lower-income families, the destitute elderly and the disabled.

During the recent economic slowdown in Singapore, the Government and the community responded to the situation by providing those who had been retrenched with interim financial assistance and with help so that they could move into new jobs. The Government also had a host of measures which provided relief to businesses so as to improve employment conditions.

Economic development is undoubtedly necessary to ensure social stability. The thrust of our social development policy is to deploy resources to pre-empt social problems and actively shape the development of our society.

Our social policy seeks to help the disadvantaged to be as self-reliant as possible through measures such as providing training and employment and helping disadvantaged families cope with day-to-day life. The community, together with the Government, is responsible for the development of social safety nets to help disadvantaged families and individuals in Singapore. This approach also fosters a caring and compassionate society in which every individual is given a place to participate and contribute.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Dharmadass Baichoo, Chairman of the delegation of Mauritius.

Mr. Baichoo (Mauritius): The year 1995 was marked by two significant events not unrelated to each other. The first was the World Summit for Social Development, an event "ahead of its time" (A/S-24/PV.1), to quote the Secretary-General of the United Nations. A second significant event that year was the coming into force of the Uruguay Round agreements. Not surprisingly, the first preambular paragraph of the Marrakesh Agreement underscores that relations in the field of trade and economic endeavour have as an objective the social and economic welfare of people. There are differing perceptions as to how and whether this objective has been translated into reality since Copenhagen.

Copenhagen provided an opportunity to launch new initiatives to address major threats associated with poverty, inequality, discrimination, oppression and other ills afflicting societies. Some progress has been achieved, but it has been most uneven.

I should like to make a few observations on the progress which my country has made since 1996 in the

implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration. I need here to emphasize that Mauritius initiated its socio-economic policies for promoting human development well before the advent of the World Summit. In 1968, our founding fathers laid the foundation of the young and independent State on the twin pillars of parliamentary democracy and a welfare system. In its decision-making process, the Government continues the practice of involving the private sector and trade unions in major policy issues affecting the functioning of our economy so as to ensure that the fruits of economic prosperity are within everyone's reach.

Mauritius devotes about 35 per cent of its national budget to financing, inter alia, social services, social security, health, education and housing. This exceeds by far the targets set out in the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

Since 1968, Mauritius has taken the following measures aimed at promoting and consolidating human-centred sustainable development with emphasis on helping the poor: a pension scheme for all retired Mauritian citizens aged 60 and above; a trust fund for the financing of projects aimed at integrating the vulnerable groups; free education from pre-primary to tertiary level, with a view to empowering our people in this knowledge-based new economy, primary education being compulsory; adequate training and retraining facilities for upgrading of skills; participation of the elderly in decision-making processes in the community development of their regions through the establishment of the "Comité des Sages"; a National Health Service scheme that is free and accessible to all citizens; the establishment of a Women's Entrepreneur Council to promote women's entrepreneurship, in line with commitments taken at the Beijing Conference; the provision of adequate housing to achieve the concept of "a roof for every family"; and the provision of clean and safe drinking water.

The overriding objective of these measures is to provide equal opportunities to vulnerable groups, especially the disabled, so that they can become gradually integrated in society.

Although our economic growth has generally hovered around 5 per cent per year, our small island developing State remains vulnerable to both exogenous and endogenous factors. Economic volatility in the wake of globalization and trade liberalization, the absence of a level playing field at the international level — and therefore stiff international competition among unequals — and the gradual erosion of preferential and guaranteed market access for our products remain serious threats to our socio-economic development. Therefore, a further opening of markets and an increase in the level of official development assistance, as agreed in the Copenhagen Declaration, should be given urgent consideration by the developed countries to sustain our economic growth.

A market economy can, and does, under certain conditions, promote growth. However, the pursuit of growth for growth's sake, as is the case today, with emphasis on higher levels of productivity, leads to skewed development processes which result in great income and wealth disparities both within and between countries, thereby causing all types of social exclusions.

Our quest for justice and equality is aimed at establishing a decent and civilized society. These two elements, I believe, should be the principles guiding our efforts in the search for justice and equality. To succeed in this quest for justice and equality, there is a need to promote fresh ideas and policies aimed at a gradual reform of the current system, with the ultimate objective of a resocialization of the economy.

Finally, it is on the basis of our degree of success in harnessing support in favour of a development strategy that promotes the establishment of a decent and civilized society by which future generations will remember us.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Federica Bigi, Chairperson of the delegation of San Marino.

Ms. Bigi (San Marino) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino at this special session of the General Assembly, which has been given an very significant title — a title that is also a challenge to the international community five years after Copenhagen: "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world".

My Government is aware of the primary importance of overcoming the obstacles in order to attain the objective of social development for all, but also of the considerable difficulties involved. Nonetheless, the positive results reached by the United

Nations and its specialized agencies in strengthening democracy and improving economic, health and social conditions are for us a constant source of hope and optimism in the future, despite the inevitable failures and the persistence of undeniable problems.

In this respect, we should underscore the primordial role and the specific competence of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in the social sphere, with regard to all matters relating to employment and the protection of workers' rights. The 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work represents a major step towards the effective implementation of basic standards in this area and is a very important reference point for policies at the national level. The first global report, issued a month ago, pursuant to the Declaration, concerns freedom of association and the right to engage in collective bargaining, two fundamental principles the compliance with and full implementation of which are prerequisites for attaining social development.

Promoting social development means ensuring the protection of the weakest sectors of the population, first and foremost, children, who still today are often the main victims of poverty, violence, ignorance and exploitation. Last February, the San Marino Parliament unanimously ratified ILO Convention 182, to prohibiting the worst forms of child labour. This legal instrument, to our way of thinking, should henceforth be made binding international law.

In recent decades, we have witnessed unprecedented economic growth, which has been brought about as a result of the globalization of markets and the remarkable growth of technologies, particularly in what has been called the informatics revolution. This development, however, has touched only a small part of the world; men and women in many parts of the world have suffered only the adverse impact of globalization, which has widened the gap between the rich and the poor, while the serious financial crises that it has brought with it have subsequently weakened those individuals' economic competitiveness. The fundamental problem lies in the lack of balanced economic growth between, and even within, the countries of the world.

Today, more than ever, combating poverty is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative. It is not acceptable, as we enter the third millennium, that hundreds of millions of human beings suffer from the lack of food, proper housing, access to education, basic health care or any prospect of decent employment. Public opinion, particularly in the Western countries, which are a numerical minority but which hold and use the lion's share of the world's resources, is aware of this; people are realizing, in dramatic fashion, the enormous imbalances and profound inequalities that characterize the world today.

It should be stressed here that a major contribution is made by the many non-governmental organizations that have done a remarkable job in consciousness-raising and information dissemination. These organizations have a significant effect on national authorities and on international bodies, particularly when it is a matter at the national, regional or world level, of deciding on strategies to combat poverty and determining measures to alleviate the burden of foreign debt for the poorest countries. Without a doubt, the question of foreign debt is for many countries a tremendously serious problem that limits their potential and their capacity to develop, both economically and socially.

Civil society, whose representatives are meeting in parallel with our Assembly, at Forum Geneva 2000, expect this special session to provide fresh impetus to the process started at the Copenhagen Summit, with a view to eradicating poverty, combating social exclusion, achieving full employment and promoting more just, secure and stable societies.

States and the international community as a whole have a duty to commit themselves to ensuring for every individual, every family, every social group and every people living conditions that enable them effectively to enjoy their fundamental rights, which were first set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Economic interest and the legitimate aspiration to make a profit and gain wealth cannot lead us to disregard the imperative of solidarity. The fundamental rights of the individual or of the community cannot be sacrificed in the name of the market and its forces. The globalization of the economy must, of necessity, go hand in hand with the globalization of solidarity. This is an ancestral value of the human family, shared by diverse cultures and religions, which cannot be disregarded as we draw up the economic and social policies of the twenty-first century.

In closing, on behalf of my Government, I would like to express the hope, in the form of an invitation, that this special session of Geneva will prompt at the highest level around the world, a sincere and insistent commitment to international solidarity.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gelson Fonseca, Chairman of the delegation of Brazil.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over this special session, and I wish you the greatest success. From President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, I bring a message of recognition of the historic importance of the Copenhagen Summit, which he considers a landmark in strengthening the progress of both Governments and the United Nations policies towards attaining full social development.

In Brazil, the Government, the Parliament and different sectors and organizations of civil society have taken great pains to implement the commitments of Copenhagen. We know that without democracy there is no real social development.

In recent years, Brazil has tried to improve the interaction between the State and society so as to better identify the public interest and define policies compatible with it. The fact that social demands are broader and more diversified nowadays shows the emergence, in Brazil, of an ongoing process of public debate, in which demands that before went unheard have gained visibility and new ideas have appeared. In short, what we have been seeing is the democratization of the Brazilian State.

Thus, we have greater efficiency of public administration, providing greater equity, because this enables the Government to concentrate its resources on measures of immediate interest to the disadvantaged. The process of decentralization has been intensified through the upgrading of activities undertaken by provincial governments and municipalities, supported by the transfer of federal resources earmarked for social programmes, in particular in the areas of health and education. The results of this new strategy can already be observed.

The "Real Plan" for economic stabilization made it possible to stop inflation, which had terrible effects on the most vulnerable segments of the population, and served as the foundation on which Brazil began to build a more equitable society. The creation of a stable macroeconomic environment, in addition to a series of initiatives in the fields of education, health and employment, led to a drop in the proportion of people living in poverty, from 41.7 per cent in 1993 to 32.7 per cent in 1998.

Other social indicators improved in Brazil from 1993 to 1998: life expectancy at birth increased from 66.2 to 67.7 years; the infant mortality rate decreased from 41.1 per cent to 36.1 per cent; and the illiteracy rate fell from 16.4 per cent to 13.8 per cent in the population above 15 years of age.

As regards education, a real revolution has taken place, with the rate of children not attending school falling drastically, from 18 per cent in 1992 to 4 per cent nowadays. Enrolment in secondary education has increased more than 50 per cent in the last five years, and progress towards the elimination of illiteracy is clear.

Health care has undergone profound changes in Brazil. We have sought free universal access to health care, with special emphasis on prevention. Every year, that accounts for more than $20 billion from federal, provincial and municipal budgets altogether.

Every child in public schools receives food every day, which has had a favourable impact on the quality of nutrition and the health of children. Other successful initiatives in this area are the basic health and family health programmes and the nationwide vaccination campaigns. Brazil is among the countries with the highest rate of DPT vaccination, and is even ahead of some developed countries.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Brazil has one of the best programmes in the world for HIV/AIDS prevention, and we are one of the few countries that distribute free medicine to infected persons to slow down the progress of the disease.

In the field of employment, Brazil is one of the few developing countries that offers unemployment benefits and a large-scale professional retraining programme. Equally important are credit programmes and income support programmes undertaken by the federal Government, amounting to more than $8.5 billion per year, or 2.4 per cent of 1999 gross domestic product.

It should also be noted that, over the last five years, Brazil has undertaken the largest agrarian reform

programme of its history. Roughly 373,000 families have received plots of land and the Government has bought or appropriated an area approximately half the size of Italy.

Social expenditures have reached a significant level in Brazil, one of the countries that invests most in this sector in Latin America. In fact, per capita federal social outlays rose almost 40 per cent between 1993 and 1998, and now represent 21 per cent of gross domestic product.

Combating poverty and inequality is not only an ethical imperative but also an economic one. For this reason, the efforts to make progress on social issues continue to mobilize Government and society as a whole.

Social development depends on economic development. While it is true that globalization has created new opportunities for countries to take part in the global economy, it must be recognized that these opportunities have not brought the expected benefits to developing countries. It is imperative that the growing disparities within the international economic system be redressed, and it is essential that opportunities for economic growth be extended to all.

Development depends on appropriate internal policies and on basic and fair rules in the international system. In the 1990s, Brazil accepted the challenges of globalization by opening its markets to foreign goods and by attracting foreign investment.

We, the developing countries, must reject the view that we are the only ones at fault and that we must continuously and indefinitely make structural adjustments. We must emphasize that now it is primarily up to the developed countries to make the necessary adjustments to the process of liberalization taking place in international economic relations and trade.

In the financial sector, a preventive strategy is called for to guarantee that the logic of the market and the social needs of peoples are balanced. Flows of official assistance must be increased.

In the commercial area, a more equitable international system is required. Over the last 10 years, Brazil has opened up its markets broadly. Nevertheless, many developed countries keep their markets closed and continue to subsidize local production and exports, particularly in the agricultural sector. An equitable system would allow products of developing countries the same level of access as that enjoyed by developed countries in our markets.

These are the challenges that the international community must take up if we wish the globalization process to become less asymmetrical and to take place in a greater spirit of solidarity.

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt and Chairperson of the delegation of Egypt.

Mrs. Mubarak (Egypt): We are here once again as partners to review our efforts in addressing the goals of national and international social development, and I welcome this opportunity to share some of my thoughts on the lessons learned so far and on the challenges ahead.

Five years after Copenhagen, we are still looking for the human face of globalization. In our new globalizing world of accelerating change, the forces of unrestrained free markets have exposed large numbers of people to uncertainties unimagined by previous generations. The evil of unemployment, the pain of poverty and deprivation, and the burden of debt all have become magnified by the closeness of our societies. It has become increasingly clear that the challenges of "one society for all" — as envisioned by the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development — remain largely unmet.

The question we must ask ourselves is, why has this lofty ideal fallen short in its implementation? Were our expectations too high? Were we too ambitious? Why is it so difficult to meet the vital challenge of ensuring an equitable balance between nations that live in the midst of plenty and those for which basic necessities are still out of reach?

One answer, I am convinced, lies in the absence of a new dynamic development model that creates the conditions necessary for economic progress and ties such progress to social development. There is a complementarity between "growth and redistribution", as opposed to the old "growth and trickle-down" model for poverty reduction. It is here, I believe, that the value of this Summit lies. We must all go beyond wish lists, beyond socially responsible rhetoric, to ensure that action plans provide the incentives and the tools needed to translate the Copenhagen goals and values into concrete accomplishments on the ground.

This will not be an easy task. So far we in the developing world have seen well-meaning attempts by international organizations, and indeed by many Governments, to link aid to social protection. Countries have initiated a range of policies aimed at integrating economic and social development — a highly complex task — with varying degrees of success. These efforts will continue to have mixed results unless the fundamental rules of the game are changed. Today, third-world countries are expected to implement reforms in a fraction of the time it took first world countries to absorb change. We have a new revolution on our hands, where "transformation" and "transition" have become the buzzwords of progress.

Third world countries, by definition, have fewer resources to meet the conflicting claims on them. When these resources are made even scarcer by the demands of debt repayment, then we are talking about an ever-shrinking slice of the cake, which is required to feed ever-growing numbers.

We are all subject to the pressures and risks of globalization, yet we do not share equally either in its burdens or in its benefits. Globalization and its attendant, the so-called open market, which is not friendly to the poor, the weak or the vulnerable, gives an extra edge to those individuals and groups that have the initial advantage of wealth, knowledge and networks; they are controlled by powerful interest groups.

We were led to believe that transnational companies would replace our failing public enterprises in generating investments, employment and exports. Yet their activity is increasingly concentrated in the few countries and regions that were able to make an early transition and are backed with strong political support from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. The role played by national Governments in the area of social policy is undermined by donor requirements to reduce government intervention. Social responsibility requires regulation and closer monitoring by the relevant national Governments to ensure that market actors such as transnational and local entrepreneurs balance the desire for profit maximization with the duty — I repeat, the duty — to serve the public good.

Egypt has been grappling with these difficult equations of progress. Our economic reform proceeded successfully in the last decade of the past century. The question we ask ourselves after this long reform is whether Egypt has matched this economic success story with a social one. The answer is a qualified yes.

Despite the constraints just mentioned, and indeed many other constraints, the spirit of partnership from the bottom up has permeated all of our efforts to promote grass-roots participation; expand budget allocations for social sectors; successfully attain the 20/20 objective; streamline the national budget; and focus support for vulnerable households.

Elements of success can be found in such projects as low-income housing, the rehabilitation of squatter areas, the implementation of the indicators of human development at the regional level, and the creation of information decision support centres for decentralized governance.

But there are priorities in how we slice the pie that constitutes our available resources. We have chosen to focus our social policy on the three pillars of twenty-first-century society: human development, gender equity and overall poverty reduction. In all of these areas we have had success stories — in education, in health and nutrition, in gender equity and in poverty reduction.

Some of the challenges that still lie ahead are the creation of more job opportunities for young graduates, as well as the provision of low-cost housing and better social security coverage for the vulnerable. What we are striving to design are policies that create dynamic comparative advantages for the small, the traditional, the poor and the self-employed as a means of overcoming the roots of poverty and social exclusion.

I would like to turn to the 10 commitments endorsed in Copenhagen five years ago. The needs of the small and micro-enterprises, including those in the informal sector, cut across at least seven out of the 10 commitments and yet are mentioned in only two. For most of the Copenhagen goals to materialize, I suggest a focus on this particular socio-economic group. This sector may in fact provide the answer in our search for a viable engine of growth with equity and grassroots participation.

I propose that here in Geneva we think together of a mechanism whereby the micro- and small-enterprise sector can become a vehicle for a new development model. For too long, and in line with the old development philosophy, our economic policies

have dwelt on the formal, the large, the modern. Studies across the world now show that self-employed entrepreneurs and informal activities have been growing as a share of employment and gross domestic product over the past two decades. The informal and micro-enterprise sector is organically linked to those very poor households that we wish to target. It represents the greatest number of those striving for a decent livelihood in the labour force, and it accounts for the bulk of private entrepreneurship, which we aim at dynamizing.

Important lessons are emerging from the concrete attempts made by a number of pioneers from the developing world to promote assistance for the informal sectors and the poor. What we need are new mechanisms whereby the fruits of successful practices can be harnessed to help microentrepreneurs. We also need the results of research in information technology applications to serve those vast numbers of working men and women in remote villages and overcrowded urban areas.

Such an initiative could become part of a number of new initiatives that would operate in parallel, including the one I presented at the recent Beijing + 5 meeting in New York. The proposal I made then was for a global trust fund or facility for women similar to the Global Environment Facility. Such facilities would act as an umbrella to existing institutions, programmes and funds charged with the formulation of strategies and the implementation of concrete actions. They would consolidate presently fragmented efforts as well as mobilize more resources to meet priority needs on the gender and microenterprise agendas.

These suggestions are meant to pave the way towards realizing the goals and commitments of Copenhagen with better coordination, more resource mobilization and increased partnership. I trust that this special meeting of the international community will bring closer the views of stakeholders from the South and the North on how best to resolve our shared concerns for global equity and participation.

Parallel to our meeting, an important event is taking place: the Geneva 2000 forum. These are voices that deserve to be heard. A new development paradigm could evolve from a true partnership between the South and the North. It can be done and, for the sake of future generations in our global village, it must be done.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Diakite Fatoumata Ndiaye, Minister for Social Development of Mali.

Mrs. Ndiaye (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Five years ago, heads of State and Government met to acknowledge the universal importance of social development and the need to attain those objectives. The conference arose because of the worldwide recognition of the urgent need to find solutions to the most serious social problems, particularly poverty unemployment and social exclusion, which affect all our countries, especially the developing countries. In the course of the Summit, it became clear that both the root causes of these problems and their lamentable effects needed to be addressed so as to reduce the uncertainty and insecurity they inflict on the lives of individuals.

On that occasion, the international community came to share the belief that economic and social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually strengthen each other in the process of seeking sustainable development. It also recognized that economic growth in general, supported in the context of sustainable development, is essential to ongoing social development and that well-designed social policies have a beneficial effect on economic and social development.

Armed with such understanding, the Summit assumed commitments in the context of a Programme of Action designed to be a real framework for action for the international community as a whole so as to promote social development and ensure the well-being of everyone throughout the world.

In Mali, despite the lack of a national action plan drafted specifically to the purpose, several policies and strategies have been adopted and major sectoral programmes introduced that all fall within the objectives of social development. The Government of the Republic of Mali has made the anti-poverty campaign a major focus by adopting, inter alia, a national anti-poverty strategy drawn up within a broadly participatory process and submitted to its partners, who unanimously agreed to it here in Geneva in 1998.

In the context of establishing an environment conducive to social development, the economic policies we have implemented have allowed us to achieve average growth, which, unfortunately, has not

translated into a significant reduction of poverty, which remains very high, particularly in rural areas. Major inequalities remain in the distribution of income, education and access to health care, as well as in sanitation and drinking water. Significant sectoral programmes have been introduced and implemented to redress these inequalities and to ensure universal access to health care, education, justice, drinking water, decent shelter and employment opportunities.

A programme for sanitary and social development, implemented to improve the living conditions of the people, arose from a comprehensive approach. The result of lengthy consensual consideration on the health care and social action system, it seeks to reduce the morbidity and mortality rates linked to the major diseases and to help reduce social exclusion.

In order to achieve universal and fair access to quality education, a 10-year education programme was designed. Its ongoing implementation will allow us to reach important objectives, inter alia, a rate of enrolment of at least 75 per cent by 2007 and a reduction of the disparity between girls and boys.

In order to promote social integration and to build a stable, safe and fair society based on respect for the law and the guaranteed human rights of all, the Government launched several actions, among them the annual convening of a forum on "space for democratic exchange", at which every citizen can call the State directly to account, through officials of ministerial departments, on any perceived violation of his or her rights.

A 10-year justice programme has also been drawn up to make the judicial machinery, and justice itself, more accessible, efficient and reliable. It seeks to bring justice closer to those subject to it, to promote and protect human rights in general and those of the underprivileged in particular, and to fight corruption and financial delinquency.

In order to promote the objective of full employment, a national employment programme has been drawn up to reduce poverty. Its goals are to create and promote the qualitative and quantitative creation of productive jobs. It lays particular stress on the employment of women, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, a programme of work-intensive infrastructure and informal employment. In order to implement all this, the State is promoting partnership between employers and unions.

In order to promote equality between men and women, a plan of action for women — in the context of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action — has been drafted. Its implementation has allowed significant progress to be made in the establishment of equality and equity between men and women, recognizing and enhancing the participation and role of women in political, civil, economic and cultural life.

Despite major efforts made by my country, Mali, and significant sacrifices assumed by the people, much remains to be done. A Ministry of Social Development, Solidarity and the Elderly was recently created, demonstrating the renewed commitment of the highest authorities of Mali to strengthening action to achieve the objectives of social development and the anti-poverty campaign.

The Government of Mali is convinced that the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action remain the basic framework for action to promote social development in the years to come. It must, however, be accompanied by a stronger commitment to action and to enhanced solidarity on the part of the international community with the developing countries and among the developing countries themselves. As President Alpha Oumar Konaré, the President of the Republic of Mali, said at the Copenhagen Summit:

> "Social development is a real world challenge that we must all take up together, beyond the policies of propaganda and hypocritical politics."

We must move from speech-making to action, from commitment to practice, inter alia, by seeking a definitive solution of the problem of debt that will allow resources currently used for servicing to be diverted to the social sectors. Meeting the challenge of social development and the struggle against poverty is more than a duty. For the international community, it is an obligation and our failure to meet it could threaten society's equilibrium and its very stability.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.